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# Museum Exhibit To Feature Liners Seeking Atlantic 'Blue Ribbon'

Editor's Note: Although the material in the following article duplicates in large degree the full account of the quest for the transatlantic Blue Ribbon given in the special United States feature edition of the Peninsula's newspapers, Friday, June 20, it is included here by reason of the fact that it serves to announce the opening of an "Exhibit of the devoted to American liners that aspired to the title of Blue Ribbon Greyhound.

By FREDERICK F. HILL

Wide attention will be focussed on the new liner United States on her maiden voyage from New York, July 3, particularly as to the speed she will attain. The sea trials have shown that the ship can exceed 34 knots, or more than the known speed of any merchant or large naval craft.

This year is an opportune one in which to review the story of the increase in steamship speed, and of the various shipowners who have strained to capture the title "Blue Riband of the North Atlantic." The history of the development of steam power for the propulsion of vessels has been one of design, of metal strengths and of fuels. The pathway to the present efficiency of turbines and high pressure boilers was beset with problems, and has its record of trials and errors in many of the ships built by every maritime nation.

Toward the middle of the 19th century the new era of an industrial age with steam-driven machinery for the manufacture of textiles and other goods took place in England, and, to a lesser extent, in other industrial countries of Europe. The situation was quickly realized in America and by all thoughtful people of the world, that the machine age had arrived and that more rapid transportation by water was needed than that afforded by sailing ships. The power of steam had already worked engines on land, and had been applied to ocean-going ships as an auxiliary to the driving force of the winds for sail power. Near the end of the century sails generally were dispensed with, and the task of propelling the ship was entrusted to the new power of boilers and machinery. The steamship was well established in transatlantic service.

SCENE OF RIVALRY

The North Atlantic has been the scene of intense rivalry, and the competition of the machine age was keen. Manufacturers needed speedier water-borne carriage for their products, and improved travel was necessary between North America and Europe.

The first Atlantic record was won by the British steamer Great Western against her rival, the Sirius, in 1838 with an average speed of 8.7 knots. Both vessels left from different starting points but reached New York by coincidence on the same day. In 1840 the Cunard Line began operation with four steamships. The Asia built in 1850 slightly lowered the time of passage with a speed of 12.12 knots for a westward run.

In 1847 America made its first serious attempt at ocean navigation with the subsidized Ocean Steam Navigaion Co. service. Again in 1849, determined efforts were made to gain a share of the trade, and the Collins Line was begun with government help, and the Arctic, Baltic, Atlantic and Pacific were constructed. The Baltic in 1852 broke the existing westward record.

The Cunarders took second place until the reversal of American political feelings cancelled the subsidy of the Collins Line, and ruined the company. Competition between the Cunard and the Inman Lines began in the 'fifties. Propeller ships were replacing the former paddle steamers. Great rivalry existed in the next decade.

WHITE STAR APPEARED

The White Star Line appeared as a competitor in 1870. Average speeds were then about 15 knots. Other companies took up the challenge. The Guion Line Arizona in 1879 was the first to be nicknamed the "Atlantic Greyhound." The French Compagnie Generale Transatlantique and the North German Lloyd Co., and the Hamburg-Amerika Co. renewed their fleets for greater speed in the 'eighties.

In the 'nineties and at the turn of the 20th century Germany was superior with several fine steamships in a successful bid for supremacy in passenger service. Triumph passed again to the British Mauretania which held the ribbon from 1908 until 1929, a feat not accomplished by any other steamship. On one occasion she worked up to over 29 knots. Her transatlantic record was broken by the German ships Bremen and Europe whose average speeds were close to 28 knots. The Italian subsidized Rex and Conte Di Savoia won next top honors, the Rex with a speed of almost 29 knots. The Fernch Normandie gained the ribbon on her maiden voyage in 1935 with a speed higher than that of her previous rivals.

Actually the "Blue Riband" is a designation only and is the English translation of the French "cordon bleu," a term which can be applied to anything of the highest distinction. It was mythical in character until the four-foot tall silver trophy was presented by the late Harold Keates Hales, a London import and export merchant in 1935, for the fastest Atlantic crossing. An international committee was formed by representatives from Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy to decide upon the conditions on which the trophy should be won.

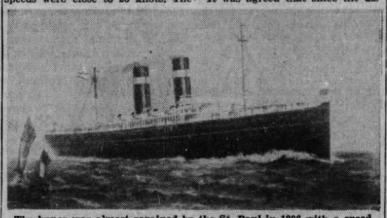
It was agreed that since the distance to be covered was not always the same and to avoid excessive speeds by the continders in crowded and restricted waters, the award should be given for the greatest speed between certain fixed positions, and not for the time required for the entire trip.

HELD SILVER TROPHY

The Rex and the Normandie have in fact been the only two ships to have held the silver trophy. The Queen Mary qualified twice in 1938 for the famous silver award but the line declined it with an official explanation that it had a tendency to develop an undesirable element of competition. To compute a passage on the basis of the quickest crossing is complicated. Speed alone between given points affords comparison. The list of Blue Riband winners, and records show that some forty vessels since the Sirius have had the honor of shortening the time for passage, wil always be open to debate and correction.

The top speeds of the giant liners during World War II have not been publicly made known. It may be that the United States will have occasional friendly competition. Whether she or any of the British vessels will try for another Blue Riband record or whether they will reserve their abilities for later days in the event of necessity remains to be seen.

The Exhibit of the Week at The Mariners' Museum will be views of some American record-breaking steamships.



The honor was almost regained by the St. Paul in 1896 with a speed of 21.08 knots. She was unable to break the 22 knots record which the Cunarder Lucania made the previous year.

One basic requirement is that the owner take a direct hand in the management of his diner.

"We don't approve of absentee owners," Camardella says. "There's an old saying that more food walks out the back door than the front door when the owner isn't on the scene."

The 19th Century ancestor of the modern stainless steel diner was a traveling hot dog wagon pulled by horses to wherever customers could be found. Some of the first diners were financed by women of wealth who espoused the cause of prohibition. They felt that by getting free lunches to working people via the horse-drawn bean wagon they could weaken the influence of the corner saloon, which offered an elaborate free lunch with a nickel beer in that happy era.

The nation's first diner is believed to have been built in the early 1880's in Worcester, Mass.

The modern diner still shows traces of its "dry" beginnings; very few of them sell liquor.

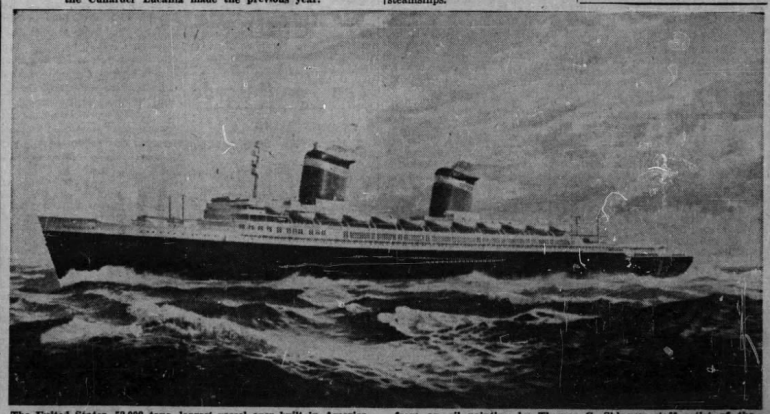
Some have tables that fold against the wall. They can be used evenings by Kiwanis clubs or Boy Scout troops. O'Mahony is promoting diners of this type for use as small town community centers.

The college campus also figures prominently in O'Mahony's future planning.

Who buys these palatial chromium diners? Most purchasers are former hotel chefs or dish-washers with a few dollars in the bank. One recent buyer of an O'Mahony diner is a retired diplomat.

"Experience is helpful but not essential," O'Mahony's president asserts. "Any good man who can use his head can make a living in this business."

A lithograph published by N. Currier in 1852, of the USM steamship Baltic of the Collins Line. She was the American-built paddle steamship which established the record for an Atlantic crossing from New York to Liverpool in that year.



The United States, 52,000 tons, largest vessel ever built in America. Her speed is reported to have exceeded 34 knots. This illustration is from an oil painting by Thomas C. Skinner, staff artist of the Mariners' Museum. Copyrighted.

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